

A WEEKLY INFORMATION DIGEST

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SWITZERLAND

WSCF Plans Long-term Project

The Executive Committee of the World's Student Christian Federation met at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland, last month, with about fifty participants from all parts of the world.

Discussion centered on a long-term project on "The Life and Mission of the Church". The project is intended mainly to present to students and some young leaders of Christian youth work the present task of the Church in the world and to call them to active participation in it. The major elements in the project will be:

1. A preparatory conference, to be held in Asia at Christmas, 1958, with the theme, "God's People in God's World". The purpose of this meeting will be to study the present problems and opportunities which the churches in Asia are facing.
2. A major teaching conference, with a maximum of 500 participants, is to be held in Great Britain in July, 1960, on the theme, "Christ's Ministry to the World and Our Calling". It will deal with the biblical understanding of the life and mission of the Church; the lessons to be learned from church history, particularly recent ecumenical and missionary history; the witness of Christian students in the intellectual climate of the university; the responsibility of the Church in situations of rapid social change; the Word of God confronting the living faiths of men, and a study of recent experiments made by the Church in its effort to face its missionary responsibility.
3. This teaching conference should be followed by a number of regional conferences to be held after 1960, with a view to reaching as many students and young Christian leaders in all parts of the world as possible. This program will be carried on over a number of years, starting immediately and lasting at least until 1962.

In other business, the Executive Committee outlined a program of development for Student Christian Movements in Africa, and made plans for a staff appointment, leadership training courses, and other activities. Decisions were also made to expand the program of the Federation in theological education and training for the ministry, work in secondary schools and teacher training colleges. Plans were made for strengthening work in Asia by new staff appointments, and for exploratory work in the Middle East. Encouraging reports were received about the expansion of Student Christian Movements in Latin America, and a report was received on the first Federation visit to Iceland in many years.

E.P.S., Geneva

UNITED STATES

General Board Expresses Concern at Threats against Ecumenical Patriarch in Turkey

(Chicago) - The 150 members of the General Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. have expressed concern at the continuing threats against the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Turkey.

In a resolution passed unanimously at a meeting in Chicago on May 2 and 3, the policy-making group authorized council officials to express the council's concern "to proper officials of the United States government."

Introducing the resolution, Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, vice-chairman of the board's Policy and Strategy Committee, cited an apparent "concerted campaign" in Turkey aimed at the "forceful ejection of the Ecumenical Patriarchate."

He recalled that a year and a half ago the General Board went on record with a similar expression of concern at an outbreak of anti-Greek riots in Turkey. More recently, he said, there has been a virulent press campaign against the Greek Christian community in Turkey.

The resolution asked Council officials to express the Council's concern to proper government officials "at reports that pressure may be applied to the Ecumenical Patriarchate to force the removal of that ancient seat of Christendom against its will from its historic seat at Istanbul."
E.P.S., Geneva

GERMANY

Gollwitzer Defends Contacts with Eastern Churches

Professor Helmuth Gollwitzer of Bonn has replied to attacks made on the ecumenical contacts maintained between East and West, declaring that these relationships are practical evidence of the affirmation "we intend to stay together" made by the Amsterdam Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1948. His reply is published in "Evangelische Verantwortung", the paper of the Protestant Study Group of the Christian Democratic Union, which originally carried the criticisms.

Dr. Gollwitzer cites points to be considered in evaluating the attitude of the Eastern churches. He says that some political statements made by the Moscow Patriarchate arose from the "massive threat to this church which has for so long lived in martyrdom." The Moscow statements, according to the German theologian, are among the conditions on which the Moscow church has been able to go on living; they did not affect its spiritual life, doctrine or worship and were conditioned by the church's traditional attitude to the state. The Russian Church could not be expected to adopt an "unorthodox" stand towards the state. It was true that Western Christians had the right to disapprove political declarations of their churches, but the Western Christian had no right to criticize churches and church leaders in the East "from the safety of his own harbor," and to express pharisaical opinions about people and churches living under oppression.

Official church leaders in Eastern Europe "are appointed in accordance with church order and fully recognized in their office by the congregations," Gollwitzer continues, arguing that it is necessary to work through these leaders to get in touch with Christians under Communism. It had been decided, in Germany and in the ecumenical movement, to resolve the situation by working through the church leaders. "The outcome," writes Gollwitzer, "has proved that we were right. It has shown us how guilty we should have been if we had failed to seize the opportunities which have opened up during the last few years."

Affirming that through exchanges it has been possible "to visit Christian churches and our brethren, including church leaders, to strengthen them, understand them better and exchange impressions," Dr. Gollwitzer recalls that "the congregations on the other side gave our delegates a very joyful and friendly welcome, which in itself would be sufficient justification of our decision." He says that the point was that "those churches must not live in isolation through any fault of ours, because such isolation would increase the danger of their position." He claims that the attitude of Christians in the West must be constantly conveyed to them because such discussion fulfills the Church's task of reconciliation in a divided world.

"In doing this," Professor Gollwitzer reiterates, "we are merely putting into practice the principles on which the whole ecumenical movement rests. Churches which are separated from each other for spiritual or practical reasons, and even those which regard one another as heretical, must try to seek fellowship for the sake of the Lord of the Church, without demanding concessions from each other beforehand. Everything we have to ask one another must be discussed after the contacts have been made on an established basis, and then discussed quite frankly. If one starts by laying down conditions one makes ecumenism quite impossible - and that not only in the case of East-West relations."
E.P.S., Geneva

GERMANY

World Committee Urged to Expand, Coordinate Christian Broadcasting

The World Committee for Christian Broadcasting has been asked to expand its activities and provide permanent staff for advice on coordination, training and expansion for

Christian work in radio and television throughout the world.

Proposals submitted to the World Committee at closing sessions of a World Conference of Christian Broadcasters held at Cronberg Castle, near Frankfurt, Germany, call for widening of its organization to include representatives of National Christian Councils and from missionary and similar groups that sponsor Christian broadcasts. Affiliated representatives would be appointed by Christian radio stations. The committee would invite professional consultants to advise on technical questions.

The suggestions foresee regular meetings of a central committee from all the major geographical areas, to carry out the policy of the world committee between meetings of its full governing body, and the raising of a budget by contributions from the participating organizations.

The world conference asked that if and when a full-time staff member is appointed by the World Council of Churches to investigate possible functions of the WCC in television and radio, the appointee should maintain close contact with "existing cooperative organizations already at work."

More than a hundred experts from nineteen countries attended the world conference, from April 25 to May 1. They heard addresses from twenty-four speakers on "Bringing Modern Man to a Christian Life through Radio and Television". The speeches will be published together as a review of current problems in Christian broadcasting. The World Committee for Christian Broadcasting was formed at a meeting held at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland, in April 1953 (see EPS No. 18, 1953). The new chairman of the committee is Dr. Nicolaas van Gelder of Utrecht, Holland. The original co-chairmen, Rev. W. Burton Martin, U.S.A., and Pastor Werner von Meyenn, Germany, have been elected honorary presidents and continue as editors of the committee's quarterly, "The Christian Broadcaster", published in English and German editions. Miss Abby Jacobs, U.S.A., was named managing editor. E.P.S., Geneva

SOUTH AFRICA

More Representative Council of South African Churches Proposed

(Pretoria) - The Federal Council of Dutch Reformed Churches of South Africa, meeting at Pretoria, has expressed itself in favor of forming a South African Council of Christian Churches. The resolution, passed by the council, stated that the English churches are already linked in the Christian Council of South Africa. The Afrikaans-speaking churches, the resolution said, must be organized in a similar council before the Christian Council can be approached with the idea of forming an inclusive South African Council of Christian Churches.

The Federal Council suggested that the other Afrikaans churches (the Gereformeerde Kerk and the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk) be approached in order to find a more efficient form of cooperation than the present Inter-Church Committee.

The Council approved the statement issued last year by one of its committees on "The Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa and the Problem of Race Relations", which was published in the "Ecumenical Review" in October 1956, (Vol. IX, No. 1).

E.P.S., Geneva

HUNGARY

Reformed and Lutherans Form Peace Committees

(Budapest) - The Lutheran and Reformed Bishops of Hungary and representatives of the dioceses have met in Budapest members of the Hungarian "National Peace Council". According to a report from the Lutheran church paper, the "Evangelikus Elet", the meeting was held at the request of the National Peace Council in order to discuss the possibility of church cooperation "in a way consonant with its mission, in the efforts to preserve peace."

The two churches set up "Peace Committees" within the framework of the National Peace Council. They will function as official organs of the church.

Bishops Lajos Ordass and Zoltan Turoczy of the Lutheran Church of Hungary have appealed to governments to settle their differences through negotiation, to stop experiments with weapons of mass destruction, and to disarm. The bishops say that preaching the Christian message is the first task of the Church and peace with God is the soundest basis for world peace. At the same time the bishops urge the leaders of the Hungarian

people to do their utmost to bring peace to people's souls and to strengthen the power of the law. They draw attention to the government's declaration made in January this year, which stated that "the mistakes of the previous epoch were to be repaired, peaceful cooperation promoted between state and church, and the wounds due to the events of last October and November healed." They appeal to pastors and congregations to act in the spirit of forgiving love, which strengthens peace.

The Reformed Committee of the Hungarian Peace Council published a similar statement in "Reformatusok Lapja", the Reformed weekly paper. The statement pointed out that "our committee, in accordance with the special calling of the Church, wishes to be, in the spirit of Christ's teaching, the instrument of peace among men and nations."

The committee said it was convinced "that the roots of peace among nations reach down to the personal relations of families, co-workers and to bigger social units, and that their peaceful co-existence will make an invaluable contribution to pacification among the nations of the world. It is in this spirit that our committee is supporting the peaceful endeavors of the popular democratic order and wishes to help the socialist reconstruction towards material and spiritual betterment.

"The plans which the government of our people have made in that direction are confirmed by the thirtieth chapter of the second Helvetian confession of faith, which says: 'It is God who ordered the submission to authority for the pacification of humanity and for its peace, and the most important task of authority is to work for peace and its maintenance.'" E.P.S., Geneva

GERMANY

Christian Pacifists Seek Alternatives to War

(Saarbrücken) - Modern technical conditions of warfare have made it impossible any longer to speak of a just war, said Pastor Heinrich Grüber, of Berlin, at the 1957 annual conference of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation held at Saarbrücken. One could not quote Augustine or Luther in support of war, because neither of them knew anything about the modern technical developments which now make it possible to destroy the whole human race.

The International Fellowship of Reconciliation was founded in 1914 by the ecumenical pioneer, Dr. Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze, and Mr. George Lansbury, an English Quaker. It aims at promoting international reconciliation. During the two world wars members of the Fellowship worked on behalf of prisoners-of-war. The Fellowship rejects war as a political instrument; it tries to protect conscientious objectors to military service, and is working on the question of alternative civilian service for peace.

Pastor André Trocmé, of France, suggested recognition of alternatives to military service in the form of relief for the hungry. He urged that the ecumenical community might gather suggestions from the churches and discuss them with the competent state authorities.

Dr. Martin Niemöller objected to the misuse of the expression "the Christian West." He asked what was left in the West of the Christian morality once respected there. The West had a high percentage of divorces. "The God who is worshipped in the 'Christian West' is an idol called 'the standard of living'," he said. The white nations should realize their responsibility towards colored peoples and devote their resources to helping the exploited, instead of piling up armaments. E.P.S., Geneva

UNITED STATES

Billy Graham Comes to New York

(New York, N.Y.) - The Rev. Dr. William F. Graham, known to millions as Billy, opened his evangelistic campaign in New York's Madison Square Garden, Wed., May 15, when he addressed a near-capacity crowd of 18,500.

"A village of 5,000 in India is praying for this crusade right now. All around the world thousands of people are praying for New York," he told the audience. The New York crusade of Billy Graham is under the official sponsorship of the Protestant Council of the City of New York. On opening night there were delegations from more than a hundred churches most of them in the New York area. A choir of 1,500 men and women has been recruited from many different New York churches.

Critics of Dr. Graham, including the nondenominational "Christian Century", have charged that the audience is composed primarily of people already Christians and bus

and train delegations from points as distant as Texas and Illinois. "With trainloads of well-saved out-of-town supporters coming from as far away as Texas, the campaign will be railroaded to success," the "Century" charged in an editorial entitled "In the Garden".

"People have got the wrong idea about these delegations from out of town," Mr. Graham commented in a press conference following his opening night service. "These groups are arranged by church organizations but they are people who are unchurched."

In a sermon on "The Christian Answer to the World Dilemma", Dr. Graham took as his text Isaiah 1:1-20. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of New York; give ear unto the law of God, ye people of New York," he said substituting New York for Sodom and Gohmorrah.

Dr. Graham's sermon touched on world economic problems, overpopulated lands such as Japan and India, the threat of hydrogen bombs ("New York would be the first city to be wiped out"), racial problems, and moral problems.

Of the "disease" that besets millions, the evangelist said "The Bible calls it an ugly old fashioned term. And my terminology in New York is going to be Biblical terminology. The Bible calls it a moral disease...The Bible calls it sin." After his explanation of sin according to biblical definitions, Dr. Graham called for those who needed Christ and wished to be born again to come forward, stand quietly, and say, "I give myself to Christ."

In response to this appeal, 704 people from all parts of the vast auditorium, came forward accompanied by the specially trained counselors. The campaign will probably last six weeks with Dr. Graham preaching seven nights weekly, and may extend until September.

E.P.S., Geneva

ENGLAND

Inter-Church Aid Consultation

(Eastbourne) - About one hundred fifty representatives of churches from more than thirty-five countries will meet at Eastbourne, England, from May 31 to June 5 for the annual Consultation of the Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the World Council of Churches. Theme of the consultation will be "Inter-Church Aid As An Expression of the Fellowship of the Church".

The delegates to the consultation, both laymen and clergymen, will review the work of the past year and advise the staff on policy and procedure in the coming year. Delegates will hear reports on the current refugee situation, study specific needs in Europe, Asia, Africa and South America, draw up a list of projects needing aid, and discuss the significance of inter-church aid in political developments and in developing concerns for Christian unity.

Among the speakers during the six-day consultation will be Mr. Ranjit M. Chetsingh of India, Mr. Jacques Beaumont of France, Mr. Labib Nasir, general secretary of the YMCA in Jordan, Bishop Chandu Ray of West Pakistan, Miss Elizabeth Urbig of Germany, and the Rev. Ernest Payne of England, general secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland. Biblical study each morning will be led by the Rev. J. G. Davies, professor of Theology at the University of Birmingham.

Following the consultation, the eleven-member Administrative Committee of the Division has been invited by the British Council of Churches to hold its two-day meeting in London.

The delegation from the United States includes: Dr. R. Norris Wilson, director of Church World Service, and Miss Betty Richardson and the Rev. Russell Stevenson of the CWS staff, New York, N.Y.; the Rev. Reginald H. Helfferich, Evangelical and Reformed Church, St. Louis, Mo.; Dr. Virgil A. Sly and Dr. Robert Tobias, Disciples of Christ, Indianapolis, Ind.; Dr. Gaither Warfield, Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief, New York, N.Y.; the Rev. Harold C. Bonell, American Baptist Convention, Nashua, New Hampshire; and the Rev. Humphrey Walz, Presbyterian, Crown Point, Ind.

E.P.S., Geneva

